



**Advisory Board on Alcoholism
and Drug Abuse**



**Governor's Council on Disabilities
and Special Education**

Alaska Mental Health Board

Support AHFC Homeless Assistance Program

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, Alaska Mental Health Board, Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse and the Alaska Commission on Aging, in collaboration with the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the Alaska Brain Injury Network, have identified affordable supported housing, as provided in Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) Homeless Assistance Program, as one of their four legislative priorities for 2010.

AHFC's Homeless Assistance Program funds several programs that provide support services for Alaskans experiencing homelessness, including beneficiaries of the Alaska Mental Health Trust (people with mental illness, Alzheimer's and related dementia, developmental disabilities, brain injury and/or addiction disorders). The program braids funds from a variety of sources, including General Fund/Mental Health (GF/MH), Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Receipts (MHTAAR), AHFC corporate receipts, Alaska Capital Income Fund, and Federal Receipt Authority. Some supportive housing programs funded by the Homeless Assistance Program include:

- Homeless Assistance (Temporary Housing and Prevention). Established in 1993, this program provides capital and operations support to temporary emergency housing services providers in Alaska. It enables hundreds of homeless and/or near-homeless families to obtain or retain safe and sanitary shelter each year. Demand for this program has steadily increased as federal and municipal sources have diminished.
- Shelter Plus Care (match to allow for federal funding). This program provides rental assistance and supportive services on a long-term basis for homeless persons with disabilities, including serious mental illness, chronic problems with alcohol and/or drugs, and AIDS or related diseases, and their families. The program is in place in response to the needs of the hard-to-reach homeless population with disabilities. This is a Continuum of Care, federal HUD program.
- Special Needs Housing Grant Program. Funds for this program are awarded through competitive grants to non-profit service providers and housing developers for construction of housing for Alaska's special needs populations – primarily the beneficiaries of the Alaska Mental Health Trust. Funds from this program can be used for planning and construction activities and may provide for congregate, supportive and transitional housing types.

The Need in Alaska

- The 2009 Alaska Point-in-Time Count reflected an unduplicated count of 4,623 Alaskans experiencing homelessness: 748 were households with children, 671 reported having a substance use disorder, 532 reported having a serious mental illness, and 453 individuals were identified as chronically homeless (Alaska Point-in-Time Count, January 2009).

- In 2009, 14 individuals who were displaced and without a home, died on the trails or in camps in Anchorage. Bean's Café reported 63 deaths in the larger population of homeless people in the same year.
- Approximately 8,000 discharges from Department of Corrections had no identified housing arrangement at the time of discharge (2007 HUD homeless report, AHFC/DOC calculations).
- Alaska has approximately 522 supportive housing units, 60 supportive housing units for those who have been chronically homeless, and 556 households receiving prevention assistance. There is still a significant need to increase the capacity to serve Alaskans in retaining stable housing.

Why support services?

- Permanent, affordable housing linked to services provides people with low-income and people with disabilities who are homeless the help and support they need to remain housed and live more independent, healthy and fulfilling lives. Supported housing is the single most effective, and most cost-efficient way to reduce homelessness. It strengthens communities and helps integrate people with disabilities and other special needs into the life of their community.
- Study after study attests to the cost effectiveness of supportive housing. Not only is it significantly less expensive than the institutional alternatives that homeless and disabled people often cycle through – including shelters, institutions, corrections and hospitals – it ends tenants' dependence on emergency services for health care and treatment.

What's been done?

- Alaska benefited greatly last year from federal stimulus funds made available to help bolster efforts preventing homelessness and rapid re-housing. Alaska received nearly \$3.5 million in federal match funds through the HPRP.
- In FY09, 22 HAP projects totaling \$2,496,575 were awarded. The award process was completed by October 1, 2008 and as of September 30, 2009, 73% of the projects were in the close-out process (AHFC).
- In 2009, 13,122 unique individuals benefited from these programs. 2,515 were Alaska Mental Health beneficiaries: including 1,177 beneficiaries with mental illness, 959 beneficiaries with developmental disabilities, 330 with chronic alcoholism, 6 with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia, 43 with traumatic brain injury (Alaska Mental Health Trust status report, 2009).
- Without the resources provided by HAP, 313 homeless beneficiaries might not have received the deposit assistance and case management needed to access permanent housing in FY09. Sixty-five beneficiary households might have experienced homelessness were it not for the assistance they received with rent and utility arrearages. Hundreds more had a warm dry place to sleep during the winter in shelters that were able to keep their doors open with HAP-funded assistance.

Recommendation: Support AHFC's programs for homeless assistance in the capital section of the Mental Health Budget bill:

- **Homeless Assistance Program:** **\$10,000,000**
- **Special Needs Housing Grant program:** **\$ 1,750,000**